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CHINA: MFN CONDITIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

Your meeting will be essential in convincing Foreign Minister Qian that without "overall, significant progress" in China's human rights practices, MFN will not be renewed in June. All signs indicate that the Chinese have been less than engaged about MFN renewal because of an assumption that our economic and global interests will override our human rights concerns. While prepared to grant a few last minute concessions, they appear disinclined to make any significant changes in their human rights policies. Frank talk is necessary or Qian will leave Paris convinced that what his advisors--and not a few Americans, too--are telling him is true: The U.S. is wavering in its determination to withdraw China's MFN status over the issue of human rights.

Two human rights "events" will be imminent on the eve of the meeting with Qian. First, the 1993 Country Reports on Human Rights will be released at the end of January. It contains a fair summary of those areas where China made progress in 1993. Nevertheless, our overall assessment is not significantly different from last year's. China's human rights practices still fall short of internationally accepted norms. Secondly, during the annual U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva, which convenes for six weeks beginning January 31, the U.S. will co-sponsor a resolution criticizing China's human rights record. It will be similar to resolutions we have co-sponsored the last two years.

It is important to reassure the Chinese that the decision on MFN has not already been made despite our criticisms in the human rights report and at the UNHRC. China has four more months to address our human rights concerns. This is not a "mission impossible." During the first four months of 1993, the Chinese released a number of prisoners. The Clinton Administration interpreted this as a signal that China was both sensitive to U.S. concerns and willing to make efforts to address them. As a result, the President was able to garner sufficient support in Congress to extend MFN for another year.

In the May 28 Executive Order, the President outlined for the Chinese those areas the U.S. would focus on during the course of the year. In some of those areas, there has been progress. In others, there has been no progress or very little progress.

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China has taken a forward-looking step in entering into talks with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). But something needs to come out of these talks prior to June, even if it is only a clear-cut statement by China of its intentions and an agenda for further action. [REDACTED]

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Another key area for progress is Tibet. There are strong voices within the Congress for a more active policy on the part of the U.S. in dealing with Tibetan issues. Our policy has not changed. Tibet is part of China. But no one in Beijing or Washington should ignore the fact that Tibet's problems cannot be solved unless Beijing and the Dalai Lama work together to solve those problems. We have no desire to control or participate in this process. But movement here would have a profound impact upon the MFN debate in the U.S.

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